



SKIN CANCER: PREVENTING AMERICA'S MOST COMMON CANCER

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, claiming the lives of 9,600 people each year.
- An estimated 1 million new cases will be detected in 2002.
- Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most important factor in the development of skin cancer, which is largely preventable with consistent sun protection.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC's skin cancer prevention and education efforts are designed to reduce illness and death. CDC designed the *Choose Your Cover* campaign to change social norms by promoting various skin protective behaviors and disseminating public service announcements through broadcast and print outlets. CDC funds skin cancer prevention demonstration projects (*Pool Cool* and *Sunwise Stampede*) targeting children, parents and care givers to promote skin protection behaviors at public swimming sites, zoos, parks and recreation programs.

CDC currently is completing "Guidelines for Schools to Reduce Skin Cancer Risk Among Young People," scheduled to be released during 2002. These guidelines summarize education, policy and environmental strategies likely to be effective in promoting skin cancer risk reduction measures among children and adolescents. In addition, CDC's "Guide to Community Preventive Services" is providing systematic reviews of studies of population-based interventions to prevent skin cancer and will make recommendations regarding the use of effective interventions, also identifying promising areas for future research.

Example of program in action: The *Sunwise Stampede* program of San Diego State University promotes sun safety among zoo visitors. At the entrance to the zoo, visitors receive sun safety tip sheets and discount coupons for hats and sunscreen. Children's arts-and-craft activities and various signage throughout the zoo prompt visitors to use hats and sunscreen and to seek shade. Bus tour guides present additional sun safety messages. Data from 2 studies suggest that the intervention has been successful in increasing sun safety behavior. Of the bus tours observed, narrators complied with presenting messages 76% of the time and 92% of the visitors recalled the messages. The proportion of hats purchased with coupons was 48%.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will continue to collaborate with state health departments and national partners to promote adoption and use of the "Guide to Community Preventive Services" recommendations and interventions section. In addition, CDC will support demonstration projects and prevention research involving risk factors for skin cancer.

For information on this and other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/programs.

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